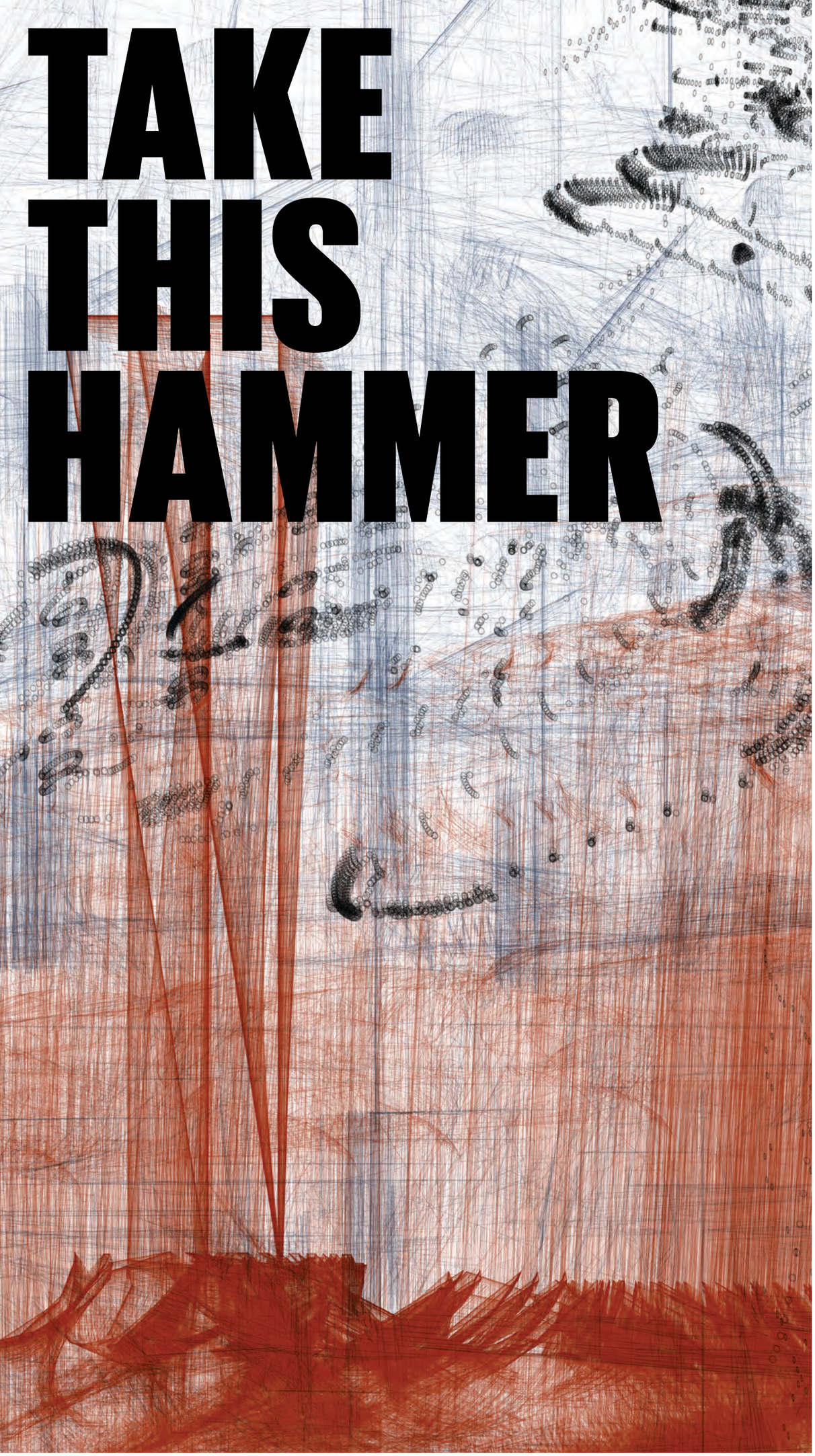
TAKE THIS HAMMER



YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

MARCH 11 – AUGUST 14 2016
DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES

YBCA.ORG/TAKETHISHAMMER
#TAKETHISHAMMER

3.9 ART COLLECTIVE
INDIRA ALLEGRA
ANTI-EVICTION MAPPING PROJECT
BAY AREA SOCIETY FOR ART & ACTIVISM
CAT BROOKS WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER/ ANTI POLICE-TERROR PROJECT
CULTURESTRIKE
DIGNIDAD REBELDE
LESLIE DREYER
THE GUANTANAMO BAY MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY
JEREMY MENDE
TUCKER NICHOLS
OREE ORIGINOL
PERSIA FEATURING DADDIE$ PLA$TIK
PITCH INTERACTIVE
ADRIENNE SKYE ROBERTS
FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ
RUBY MOUNTAIN
STAMEN
CURATED BY CHRISTIAN L. FROCK

ART + MEDIA ACTIVISM FROM THE BAY AREA

YBCA

Oree Originol, Altar, 2016. Photo © Brooke Anderson.
Photo courtesy the artist and Brooke Anderson.

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

DEBORAH CULLINAN

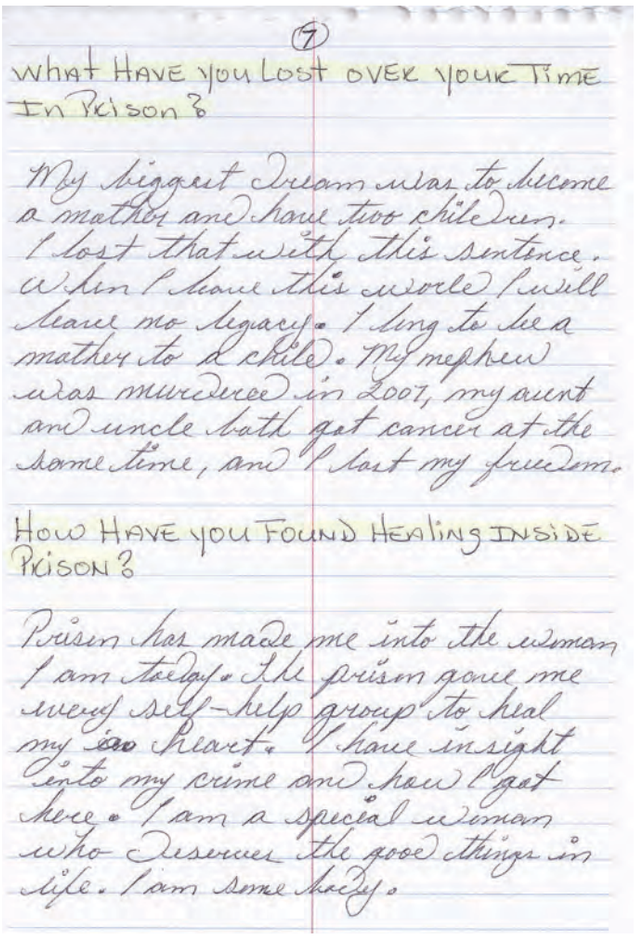
At YBCA our mission is to generate culture that moves people. Put simply, we believe that cultural movement is the essential catalyst for change. By "culture," we mean the collection of traditions, stories, and beliefs that illuminates who we are and who we can be. Culture is a moment in time. It is the expression of a community of people. In its best and most inclusive form, it is the illustration of our fears, our dreams, and our greatest desires. Like the wind at our backs, as culture gains momentum, so do we.

The San Francisco Bay Area has long been known as a place for countercultural movement that gathers force, energy, and motion until it is no longer the marginalized alternative. It is the righteous new present. In the midst of so much disruption in our Bay Area, we can't forget that this is what cultural movement can do. It can bring forth change that is just.

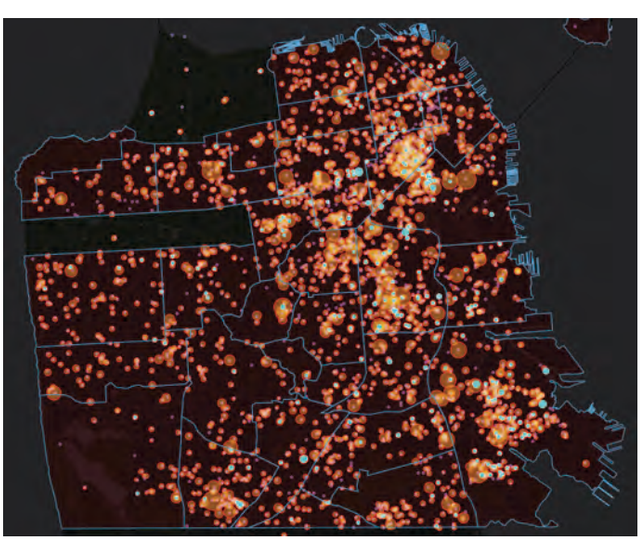
Take This Hammer: Art + Media Activism, curated by the fierce Christian Frock, is exactly the right project to undertake as this same Bay Area undergoes seismic change that includes massive displacement and the erosion of our bohemian roots. This is a project that says loudly that issues matter, that people matter, and that cultural institutions are here not only to house art and attract tourists, but also and most importantly to instigate inclusive cultural movement.

The exhibition borrows its name from the 1963 KQED documentary film that followed the author and activist James Baldwin as he sought to uncover the real situation for African Americans in San Francisco. More than fifty years later, the artists, technologists, and activists in our *Take This Hammer* exhibition provide new ways of revealing a city's truths and holding ourselves accountable.

The greatest cities of this century will be remembered as those that understood and embraced the imperative role of creative expression, collective action, and broad-based public will. *Take This Hammer* reminds us that we can and must create our own momentum.


(7)
WHAT HAVE YOU LOST OVER YOUR TIME IN PRISON?
My biggest dream was to become a mother and have two children. I lost that with this sentence. When I leave this world I will leave no legacy. I long to be a mother to a child. My nephew was murdered in 2007, my aunt and uncle both got cancer at the same time, and I lost my freedom.
HOW HAVE YOU FOUND HEALING INSIDE PRISON?
Prison has made me into the woman I am today. The prison gave me every self-help group to heal my sad heart. I have insight into my crime and how I got here. I am a special woman who deserves the good things in life. I am sane today.

Adrienne Skye Roberts, Letter from Tammy serving Life Without Parole at California Institute for Women, 2014. *A Living Chance: Storytelling to End Life Without Parole.* Courtesy Adrienne Skye Roberts and the California Coalition for Women Prisoners.



Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, *San Francisco Fires, 2005-2015,* 2015. Courtesy Anti-Eviction Mapping Project.

Indira Allegra, *Blackout*, 2015 (Detail).
Photo © Brianna Kalajian. Courtesy the artist.

A JUSTICE & EQUITY INDEX

COMPILED BY
JEFF CHANG

Total Christie's art auctions and private sales in 2009: **$3,300,000,000**

U.S. foundation giving to nonprofit arts and cultural institutions in 2009: **$2,300,000,000**

U.S. foundation giving to arts and cultural institutions benefiting underrepresented communities in 2009: **$23,000,000**

U.S. foundation giving to arts and cultural institutions advancing social justice in 2009: **$11,500,000**

Appropriations for U.S. National Endowment for the Arts in 1979 (in 2009 dollars): **$442,032,000**

Appropriations for U.S. National Endowment for the Arts in 2009: **$155,000,000**

Population of the U.S. in 2010: **309,300,000**

Appropriations for New Zealand's Cultural Ministry in 2010 (in U.S. dollars): **$199,200,000**

Population of New Zealand in 2010: **4,400,000**

Percentage of U.S. art museum leadership positions currently filled by non-Hispanic whites: **84**

Percentage of board member positions of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations currently filled by whites: **91**

Price Viacom paid in 2000 for Black Entertainment Television (in 2015 dollars): **$3,200,000,000**

Price Apple paid in 2014 for Beats Electronic (aka Beats by Dre): **$3,000,000,000**

Amount the U.S. Pentagon will spend on unclassified drone research, development, and procurement projects in 2016: **$2,900,000,000**

Number of international migrants worldwide, 2015: **243,700,000**

Percentage of the U.S. population who are international migrants, 2015: **14.5**

Number of immigrants who qualify for U.S. family-sponsored preference visas awaiting naturalization: 4**,445,000**

Number of people deported under President Obama from 2009 to 2015: **2,508,500**

Number of parents of U.S.-born children deported in 2013: **72,000**

Estimated number of years for a Philippine-born brother or sister of a U.S. citizen to become naturalized: **24**

Number of international migrants projected to be displaced in 2050 due to climate change alone: **700,000,000**

Median household income in Oakland, 2000: $**40,055**

Median household income in Oakland, 2013: **$54,394**

Percentage of African Americans as total population of Uptown, Longfellow, Temescal, and City Center neighborhoods, Oakland, 1970: **58**

Percentage of African Americans as total population of Uptown, Longfellow, Temescal, and City Center neighborhoods, Oakland, 2010: **42**

Median household income in San Francisco County, 2000: **$55,221**

Median household income in San Francisco County, 2013: **$77,485**

Median household income of Bay Area theatergoers in San Francisco County, 2013: $**105,027**

Percentage of households in San Francisco's Chinatown immediately vulnerable to displacement: **30**

Percentage increase in the number of these households since 2000: **58**

Percentage of African Americans as total population of Fillmore, Western Addition, and Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhoods, 1970: **62**

Percentage of African Americans as total population of Fillmore, "NoPa," and Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhoods, 2010: **24**

Rank of the U.S. in income inequality among global nations: **4**

Gap in income between the top 5 percent and the bottom 20 percent of households in the U.S.: **$178,000**

Gap in income between the top 5 percent and the bottom 20 percent of households in the Bay Area: **$263,000**

Rank of San Francisco in income inequality among U.S. cities: **2**

Amount spent by pro-gun organizations on federal campaigns and lobbying in 2014: **$28,638,201**

Amount spent by gun-control organizations on federal campaigns and lobbying in 2014: **$13,643,045**

Amount the Oakland Police Department and insurance carriers paid in brutality and misconduct lawsuit settlements from 1990 to 2014: **$74,000,000**

Amount the City of San Francisco settled in 2014 with Caramad Conley for wrongful conviction: **$3,500,000**

Number of years Caramad Conley spent incarcerated: **18**

White males in California incarcerated per 100,000: **488**

Latino males in California incarcerated per 100,000: **922**

African American males in California incarcerated per 100,000: **4,367**

African American infant deaths per 10,000 births: **11.5**

White American infant deaths per 10,000 births: **5.2**

Cuban infant deaths per 10,000 births: **4.7**

Number of years the average white person is expected to live longer than the average black person: **3.8**

Percentage of white Internet users who use Twitter, 2014: **21**

Percentage of Latino Internet users who use Twitter, 2014: **25**

Percentage of black Internet users who use Twitter, 2014: **27**

Number of tweets about Trayvon Martin in the first month after he was killed: **4,700,000**

Number of tweets using #Ferguson in the first eight days after Michael Brown was killed: **8,300,000**

Amount Andy Warhol's Race Riot (1964) sold for at Christie's auction on May 13, 2014: **$62,900,000**

Number of #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations held from July 19, 2014 to February 4, 2016: **1,201**

Number of years the average white person is expected to live longer than the average black person: **3.8**

Percentage of white Internet users who use Twitter, 2014: **21**

Percentage of Latino Internet users who use Twitter, 2014: **25**

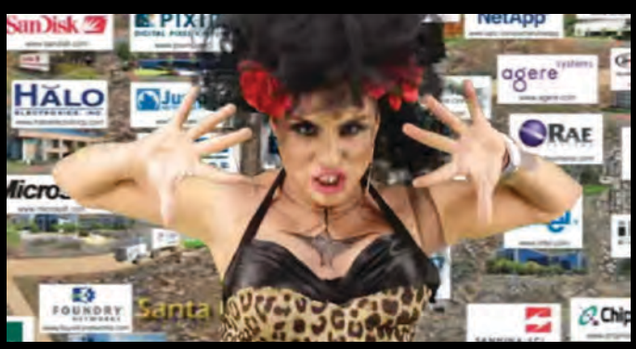
Percentage of black Internet users who use Twitter, 2014: **27**

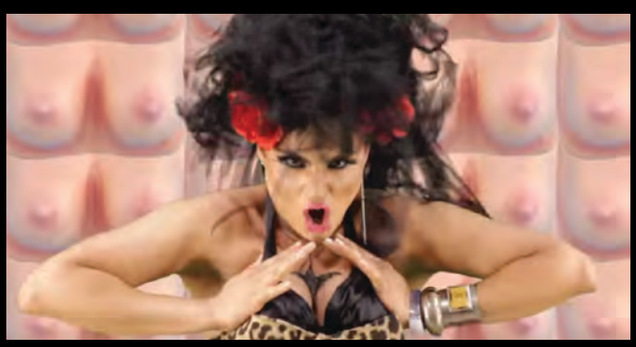
Number of tweets about Trayvon Martin in the first month after he was killed: **4,700,000**

Number of tweets using #Ferguson in the first eight days after Michael Brown was killed: **8,300,000**

Amount Andy Warhol's Race Riot (1964) sold for at Christie's auction on May 13, 2014: **$62,900,000**

Number of #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations held from July 19, 2014 to February 4, 2016: **1,201**





PERSIA featuring Daddie$ Pla$tik, *Google Google Apps Apps*, 2013.
Courtesy the artists.

Tag someone
Recent Tags
Vain Hein (Me)
Music Producer & Vocalist at...

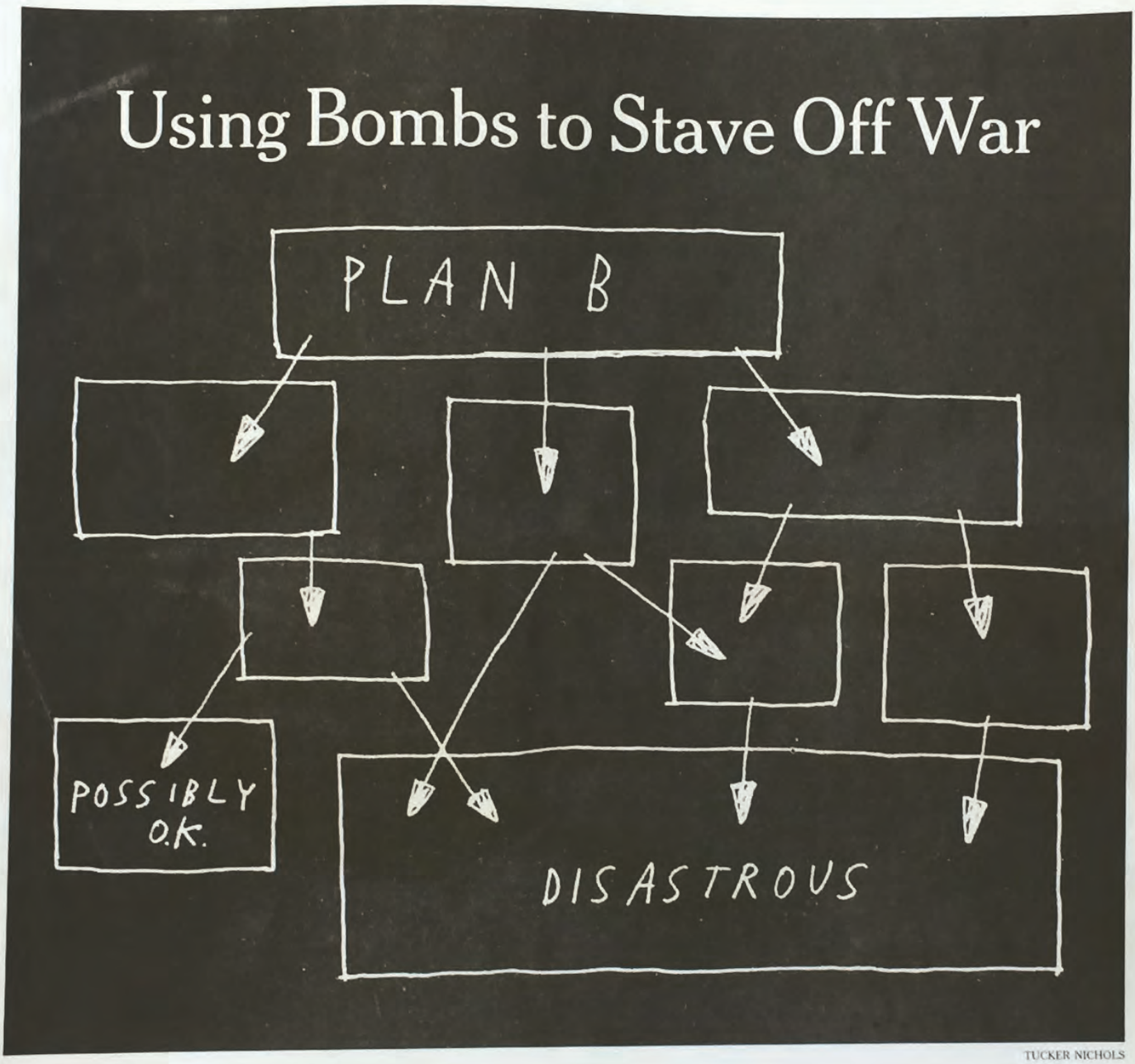
EVICTION
NOTICE

Google

Google

Tucker Nichols, *Drawings for the New York Times*, 2005-16,
Courtesy Gallery 16, San Francisco. Photo © Tucker Nichols.

Using Bombs to Stave Off War



TUCKER NICHOLS

By Benny Morris

LI-ON, Israel

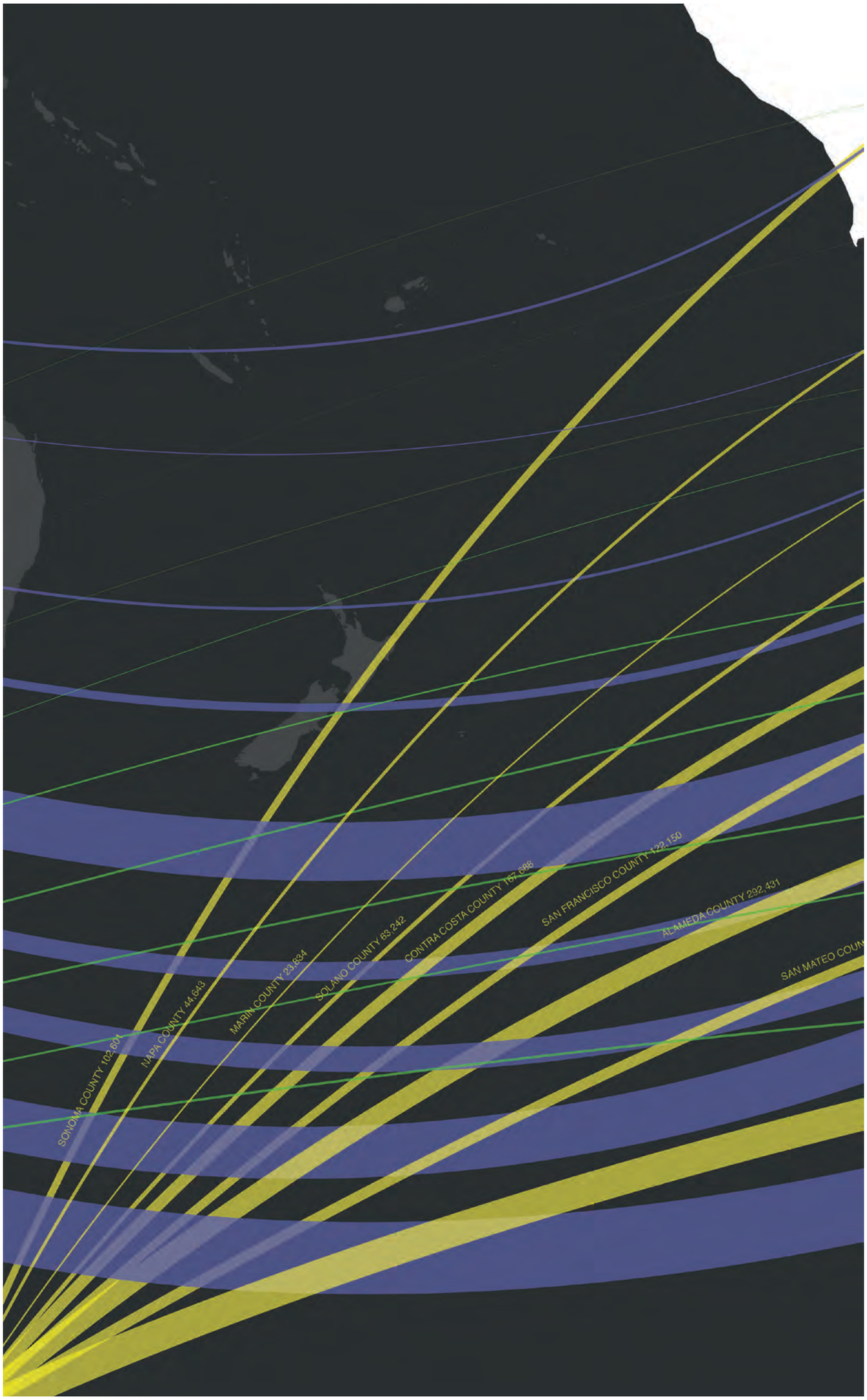
ISRAEL will almost surely attack Iran's nuclear sites in the next four to seven months — and the leaders in Washington and even Tehran should hope that the attack will be successful enough to cause at least a significant delay in the Iranian production schedule, if not complete destruction, of that country's nuclear program. Because if the attack fails, the Middle East will almost certainly face a nuclear war — either through a subsequent pre-emptive Israeli nuclear strike or a nuclear exchange shortly after Iran gets the bomb.

on the nuclear sites themselves. But, as a result of the Iraq imbroglio, and what is rapidly turning into the Afghan imbroglio, the American public has little enthusiasm for wars in the Islamic lands. This curtails the White House's ability to begin yet another major military campaign in pursuit of a goal that is not seen as a vital national interest by many Americans.

Which leaves only Israel — the country threatened almost daily with destruction by Iran's leaders. Thus the recent reports about Israeli plans and preparations to attack Iran (the period from Nov. 5 to Jan. 19 seems the best bet, as it gives the West half a year to try the diplomatic route but ensures that Israel will have support from a lame-duck White House).

that can destroy Israel. The Iranians will also likely retaliate by attacking Israel's cities with ballistic missiles (possibly topped with chemical or biological warheads); by prodding its local clients, Hezbollah and Hamas, to unleash their own armories against Israel; and by activating international Muslim terrorist networks against Israeli and Jewish — and possibly American — targets worldwide (though the Iranians may at the last moment be wary of provoking American military involvement).

Such a situation would confront Israeli leaders with two agonizing, dismal choices. One is to allow the Iranians to acquire the bomb and hope for the best — meaning a nuclear standoff, with the prospect of mutual assured destruction preventing the Iranians from actually



Stamen, *Bay Area Melting Pot: A Region of Immigrants* (detail), 2016. © Stamen

CURATOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has. — Margaret Mead

First and foremost, I would like to thank the participating artists, activists, and technologists. Deep gratitude also goes out to Deborah Cullinan and the incredible team at YBCA, including Voleine Amilcar, John Foster Cartwright, Dorothy Dávila, Tesar Freeman, Chinaka Hodge, James Im, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Susie Kantor, Ben Leon, Elena Morrison Lyman, Jennifer Martindale, Katya Min, Jonathan Moscone, Ceci Moss, Emily Reynolds, Lucía Sanromán, Joel Shepard, Rebecca Silberman, Elise Stieren, and Martin Strickland. Many thanks as well to Jennifer Bertani at WNET, Jeff Chang, Robert Chehoski at KQED, Kevin B. Chen, Tom Crabtree and Patricia Callaway and the team at Manual, Alicia Garza and Nikita Mitchell of Black Lives Matter, Rebecca Solnit, Lindsey Westbrook, Alexandra Zsigmond at the New York Times, and, most especially, Aaron Stienstra and Asa + Cleo Frock-Stienstra.

I would have loved to include in this exhibition so many more Bay Area change makers—far more than I could acknowledge here—so great is our collective history in the realm of art and activism. This exhibition is dedicated to all of you and to the spirit of resistance so deeply ingrained in this place. Never stop.

CONTRIBUTORS BIOS

CHRISTIAN L. FROCK is an independent curator, writer, and educator. Frock's practice focuses on art and politics. Invisible Venue, the curatorial enterprise Frock founded and has directed since 2005, collaborates with artists to present art in public spaces. She has organized programs, exhibitions, and commissions with many organizations, including the British Arts Council, Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Southern Exposure, SOMArts Cultural Center, and Emergency USA | Thoreau Center for Sustainability. Her writing has been featured in the Guardian US, KQED Arts, and the San Francisco Chronicle, among others. Chronicle Books published her first book, Unexpected Art, in March 2015. She recently co-curated *Public Works: Artists' Interventions 1970s – Now* at Mills College Art Museum and is presently 2015 - 2016 Scholar in Residence at California College of the Arts' Center for Art + Public Life.

invisiblevenue.com
visiblealternative.com

Writer, historian, and activist **REBECCA SOLNIT** is the author of seventeen books about environment, landscape, community, art, politics, hope, and feminism, including two atlases, of San Francisco in 2010 and, New Orleans in 2013; and the books *Men Explain Things to Me; The Faraway Nearby; A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster; A Field Guide to Getting Lost; Wanderlust: A History of Walking; and River of Shadows, Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (for which she received a Guggenheim, the National Book Critics Circle Award in criticism, and the Lannan Literary Award). A product of the California public education system from kindergarten to graduate school, she is a columnist at Harper's.

rebeccasolnit.net

JEFF CHANG co-founded *CultureStr/ke* and *ColorLines*. He is the Executive Director of the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University. His recent book, *Who We Be: The Colorization of America*, was released on St. Martin's Press in October 2014. His next book, *We Gon' Be Alright: Notes On Race, Culture, and Resegregation* (Picador) will be released Fall 2016. Chang has been a USA Ford Fellow in Literature and a winner of the North Star News Prize. He was named by *The Utne Reader* as one of "50 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World." His first book, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, garnered many honors, including the American Book Award and the Asian American Literary Award. He has written for *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Believer*, *Foreign Policy*, N+1, *Mother Jones*, Slate, Salon, and Buzzfeed, among many others.

jeffchang.net
cantstopwontstop.com

Sources from Jeff Chang's *A Justice & Equity Index*
$3,300,000,000: Christie's press release, January 28, 2010; **$2,300,000,000, $23,000,000, $11,500,000, $442,032,000:** National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy; **$155,000,000:** National Endowment for the Arts; 3**08,750,000:** quickfacts.census.gov; **$199,200,000:** New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage; **4,400,000**: http://www.stats.govt.nz; **84:** Mellon Foundation: Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey, 2015; **91:** New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; **$3,200,000,000:** New York Times, November 4, **2000; $3,000,000,000:** Forbes.com, May 28, 2014; **$2,900,000,000:** Friends Committee on National Legislations; **243,700,000, 14.5:** United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division; **4,445,000:** U.S. Department of State; **2,508,500:** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; **72,000:** Huffington Post, June 26, 2014; **24:** Washington Post, January 31, 2013; **700,000,000:** "In Search of Shelter," http://ciesin.columbia.edu/publications.html; **$40,055, $54,394:** quickfacts.census.gov; **58, 42:** Anti-Eviction Mapping Project; **$55,221, $77,485:** quickfacts.census.gov; **$105,027:** Theatre Bay Area report, 2014; **30, 58:** UC Berkeley Center for Community Innovation, June 2015; **62, 24:** Anti-Eviction Mapping Project; 4: OECD, United States Profile, May 21, 2015; **$178,000, $263,000:** Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies; 2: Brookings Institute, March 17, 2015; **$28,638,201, $13,643,045:** PBS.com, Frontline Enterprise Journalism Group, January 6, 2015; **$74,000,000:** OaklandPoliceBeat.com, April 9, 2014; **$3,500,000, 18:** SFGate.com, July 13, 2014; **88, 922, 4,367:** Public Policy Institute of California; **11.5, 5.2, 4.7, 3.8:** U.S. News and World Report, January 5, 2015; **21, 25, 27:** Pew Research Center, January 9, 2015; **4,700,000, 8,300,000:** Pew Research Center, August 20, 2014; **$62,900,000:** Christies.com; 1,201: https://elephrame.com/textbook/BLM. Iotfinder/paintings/andy-warhol-race-riot-5792521-details.aspx? from=salesummary&intObjectID=5792521&sid=b4369e0f-8d10-4417-9e4a-bb7863e1815d. 1,201: The Elephrame website is crowdsourcing this data at https://elephrame.com/textbook/BLM.

PARTICIPANT BIOS

THE 3.9 ART COLLECTIVE, featuring Rodney Ewing and William Rhodes, is an association of African American artists, curators, and art writers who came together to draw attention to San Francisco's dwindling population of black residents. **RODNEY EWING** dedicates his work to the intersection and merging of body and place, memory and fact, in order to examine human interactions and cultural conditions and create a narrative that requires us to be present and profound. **WILLIAM RHODES** is an artist and founder of the 3.9 Art Collective. Through his work he explores themes of hidden knowledge, iconography, and variation in meaning depending on cultural context. *williamrhodesart.com, threepointninecollective.com, rodneyewing.com*

INDIRA ALLEGRA explores practices of documentation through poetics and text/ile performance. In 2015 she received the Windgate Craft Fellowship, which is awarded to artists who represent the future of contemporary craft. *indiraallegra.com*

THE ANTI-EVICTION MAPPING PROJECT is a data visualization, data analysis, and digital storytelling collective documenting the dispossession of San Francisco Bay Area residents in the wake of the Tech Boom 2.0. *antievictionmap.com*

THE BAY AREA SOCIETY FOR ART & ACTIVISM is a diverse and intergenerational community celebrating the way artists and activists engage with issues of social justice, hope, freedom, history, democracy, love, labor, class, the environment, and more. *artandactivism.org*

CAT BROOKS. Artist. Mother. Communicator. Organizer. Activist. Strategist. Innovator. **ANTI POLICE-TERROR PROJECT** is dedicated to building a sustainable and replicable model for eradicating police terror from communities of color across the country. **BLACK LIVES MATTER** is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement, affirming the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. *catbrooks.net, antipoliceterrorproject.org, blacklivesmatter.com*

CULTURESTRIKE believes that cultural work is key to creating systemic change. It empowers artists to dream big, disrupt the status quo, and envision a truly just world rooted in shared humanity. *culturestrike.org*

DIGNIDAD REBELDE is a graphic arts collaboration between the Oakland-based artists Jesus Barraza and Melanie Cervantes, who believe that art can be an empowering reflection of community struggles, dreams, and visions. **JESUS BARRAZA** is an interdisciplinary artist who, through his work and the work of Dignidad Rebelde and Justseeds' Artists Cooperative, is helping to keep graphic art activism alive. **MELANIE CERVANTES** is a Xicana activist-artist who translates the hopes and dreams of justice movements into images that agitate and inspire. She is best known for her political screenprints and posters. *dignidadrebelde.com*

LESLIE DREYER is an interdisciplinary artist and organizer who creates tactical performance-interventions, media spectacles, and unsanctioned installations from within movements fighting for a right to the city and an equitable future. *lesliedreyer.com*

THE GUANTANAMO BAY MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY was created to remember the human rights abuses that occurred while the prison was in operation, and provide a framework for combating human rights abuses that persist today. *guantanamobaymuseum.org*

JEREMY MENDE an artist and designer whose work involves creating interpretive opportunities that indicate our connection to, and responsibility for, a collective society. *mendedesign.com*

TUCKER NICHOLS is an artist and author. His work has been featured in museums nationally and internationally, and his drawings have been published in *McSweeney's*, *The Thing Quarterly*, and the *New York Times*. *tuckernichols.com*

OREE ORIGINAL is an Oakland-based artist working across painting, printing, and digital media who is committed to the social transformation of marginalized communities and promoting justice for people killed by police. *oreeoriginol.com*

PERSIA is a San Francisco-based drag queen and former performer at the now shuttered legendary Mission District gay Latino nightclub Esta Noche. **DADDIE$ PLA$TIK** is an Oakland-based group comprised of Tyler Holmes, VainHein San Cha, and others. *dragmoments.tumblr.com*

PITCH INTERACTIVE is a data visualization studio whose work spans illustrations, physical installations, projections, console game user interfaces, software applications, websites, and textiles. *pitchinteractive.com*

ADRIENNE SKYE ROBERTS operates at the crossroads of art, education, and social justice organizing, working in resistance to the prison industrial complex and in collaboration with people directly impacted by incarceration. *adrienneskyeroberts.com*

FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ is an interdisciplinary artist and cultural strategist whose work addresses sexual freedom, migration, inequality, gender justice, and ecology. *favianna.tumblr.com*

RUBY MOUNTAIN, aka Krystle Ahmadyar, is a vocalist and songwriter who calls upon her training in jazz, experimental electronic, and Afghan folk music to create compositions of love, resiliency, and social justice. *soundcloud.com/rubymountain*

ELIZABETH TRAVELSLIGHT is an installation artist and educator, and serves on the executive staff of the Bay Area Society for Art & Activism. *elizabethtravelslight.com*

Founded in 2001, **STAMEN** has a reputation for its expertise in creating compelling interactive design and data visualization projects, and for research that has a way of finding applications in the real world. *stamen.com*

PROGRAMS

OPENING NIGHT PARTY
MARCH 11, 7–10 PM
GRAND LOBBY & DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES
$12 advance / $15 at the door /
Free for YBCA members & YBCA:You

Celebrate the openings of *Take This Hammer: Art + Media Activism from the Bay Area* and *Samara Golden: A Trap in Soft Division.* Enjoy a signature cocktail inspired by Samara Golden's installation, meet artists and activists involved in *Take This Hammer*, and watch the Great Tortilla Conspiracy as they screen print onto tortillas to create edible works of art.

CULTURESTRIKE COLLABORATION WITH YOUNG ARTISTS AT WORK (YAAW) PROGRAM
MARCH 1–31

CultureStrike develops a 10 session curriculum based on their cultural strategy of addressing Environmental Justice issues through the practice of art making. The curriculum combines political education in issues of climate change and climate justice via arts practices, and artist capacity development. All collaborating instructors selected by CultureStrike reflect their commitment to racial, sexual, gender and immigrant status diversity. The Young Artists at Work (YAAW) program is a paid, year-long, multi-disciplinary arts-as-activism residency for Bay Area high school youth at YBCA.

TAKE THIS HAMMER/ CURATOR AND ARTIST CONVERSATION
APRIL 14, 6–9 PM
DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES
$10 / $8 YBCA Members / YBCA:You FREE

Join Christian L. Frock and Kevin B. Chen for a conversation with the artists of *Take This Hammer*. At 6:00 PM, gather in Gallery 2 to get exclusive insight into the exhibition about local arts and media activism with an artists panel discussion.

YBCA OPEN HOUSE FOR OPEN ENGAGEMENT
APRIL 29, 2–3 PM
DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES
$10 / $8 YBCA Members / YBCA:You FREE

YBCA welcomes the Open Engagement Conference 2016 to the galleries on Friday, April 29. From 2:00 to 3:00 PM, get an exclusive tour of *Take This Hammer*, an exhibition featuring local Bay area activists and artists.

TAKE THIS HAMMER/ACTION SKILL SHARE
MAY 19, 7–9 PM
GRAND LOBBY
Free & Open to the public

Join YBCA for an evening of refining activist skills via tactical workshops and clinics by Bay Area political, arts, and media activist organizations, along with people's choice contests and live music.

TAKE THIS HAMMER/ TEN BAY AREA POETS RESPOND
JUNE 7, 7–9 PM
DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES
$10 / $8 YBCA Members / YBCA:You FREE

Celebrate the inspiration of *Take This Hammer* with local writers. Ten Bay Area poets have been invited to tour the exhibition and respond with original writing. The program will feature poetry performances by a diverse group of poets young and old facilitated by Kevin B. Chen, YBCA Chief of Program and Pedagogy Marc Bamuthi Joseph, and Associate Director of Program and Pedagogy Chinaka Hodge.

HOW TO BE (OR NOT TO BE) AN ACTIVIST
APRIL 5, MAY 3 & JULY 5, 7 PM
FREE with gallery admission

In conjunction with the *Take this Hammer* exhibition, YBCA presents three free screenings of extraordinary portraits of activist movements around the world.

APRIL 5, 7 PM
Everyday Rebellion
By the Riahi Brothers
(2013, 118 min, digital)

MAY 3, 7 PM
How to Change the World
By Jerry Rothwell
(2015, 110 min, digital)

JUL 5, 7 PM
How to Survive A Plague
By David France
(2012, 110 min, digital)

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, film/video and civic engagement. YBCA venues include the Forum, Screening Room, Galleries and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787).

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
701 MISSION ST
SAN FRANCISCO
CA 94103
415-978-ARTS
YBCA.ORG

YBCA Exhibitions 2015-2016 are made possible, in part, by Mike Wilkins and Sheila Duignan, Meridee Moore and Kevin King, and the Creative Ventures Council. YBCA Programs 2015-2016 are made possible, in part, by The James Irvine Foundation. Additional Funding for YBCA Programs 2015-2016: National Endowment for the Arts, Adobe, Gaia Fund, Grosvenor, Abundance Foundation, and members of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Free First Tuesdays underwritten by Directors Forum Members. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is grateful to the City of San Francisco for its ongoing support.

ART WORKS. | National Endowment for the Arts

Design by **Manual**
Edited by **Lindsey Westbrook**
Editorial coordination by **Susie Kantor**

Cover Image: Jeremy Mende, *The Liberator Cycle* (detail), 2014. Courtesy the artist.

→

Leslie Dreyer, *Gmuni: Free Luxury Free Market Free for All* Performance Intervention / Google bus blockade designed by Leslie Dreyer with Heart of the City; participation from Housing Rights Committee of SF, SF Tenant's Union, ACCE, performance artist Annie Danger, stilt walker Carolina Duncan-Page, and many others. April 1, 2014. Photo © Steve Rhodes

YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN

REBECCA SOLNIT

Radical politics is bodies in places. In San Francisco it was the union waterfront workers in the 1934 General Strike, was the drag and trans people clobbering police with high heels and handbags at the 1966 Compton's Cafeteria riot in the Tenderloin, was the occupation of bleak, iconic Alcatraz by Native Americans in 1969–71, was feminist Take Back the Night marches in the 1980s, was massive blockades in the Financial District when the first Gulf War broke out in 1991, was Queer Nation in the 1990s, is Black Lives Matter in 2014–16.

It is never only bodies in places; organizing in private matters, other political avenues, and even electoral politics also matters. Good journalism matters, the movement of money and power and ideas in private arenas matters. But in the end, when it comes to changing the world, from the French Revolution to the civil rights movement to the fall of the Berlin Wall to the new civil rights movement known as Black Lives Matter, bodies in places matter. In public space, to be specific. The place in which democracy is direct.

We think of democracy as an ethereal thing, an abstract one, an intellectual one, but bodies coexisting in space is the direct experience of democracy where civil society finds itself and its power. That power can be taken away by direct means—that's what totalitarian regimes that ban gatherings and crack down on dissent do—but also by indirect ones, such as the design of auto-based, private-space suburbias, or the technologically driven retreat from the public sphere and from embodiment. The Bay Area has been the scene of terrible conflict between a place that has traditionally been all about bodies in public space and the forces endeavoring to wither away both bodies and place.

The Bay Area's combination of bodies and places was often volatile and generative and radical. Some of the reasons were in the place—the mild weather that made it easy to protest when New Yorkers were freezing or Texans were frying, and the urban density. San Francisco as a gold-rush boomtown was (before the annexation of Hawaii and purchase of Alaska) as far from the Puritans and proprieties of the East as you could get, a reinvent-yourself town, a multiethnic town, a town benefiting from proximity to Asia and Mexico and distance from European intimidation, and then later a refuge town for the weird, the wild, the dissenting, and the experimental. It was what the queer historian Nan Boyd calls "a wide-open town," good at celebrating, libertine and sometimes liberated, radical and a center for resistance. It was a city of refuge, for antiwar young men and people fleeing the Central American dirty wars of the 1980s and the undocumented and people from wholesome small towns that wanted to kill them for being queer.

San Francisco is the second-densest city in the United States, possessed in its older reaches of a European kind of density. There's a way in the sprawling spaces elsewhere in the West that you're no one nowhere—there's no place to speak up, to take a stand, and the privatization of public space as shopping malls replaces main street and corporations flee city centers (as the oft-targeted Chevron, for example, moved from Market Street in San Francisco to a pastoral fortress in San Ramon). Bodies in place is theater, and the place needs to have some of the lineaments of a stage. San Francisco was and is a good stage.

Then the Bay Area produced the offshoot that turned around and endeavored to kill the host. It did so in two ways. The one we talk about is the gentrification and displacement. For the past few years I've been watching friends and acquaintances organize and show up for demonstrations (aka bodies in places) about evictions, about the Google Bus's usurping of public bus stops and enablement of Silicon Valley workers' migration to the city, about the police murder of young Latino men whose deaths seemed due to, at least in part, being perceived as menacing outsiders in the Mission—including born-and-raised Alex Nieto. For most of my life here I've been watching radical culture—art, writing, music, theater, dance—flourish, but the places in which this can happen are drying up. Most of the renters I know are on their last round in San Francisco: they will not find replacement housing if evicted, burned out, or otherwise displaced. That is, the protestors themselves, the people committed to being political bodies in places, are an endangered, fading species; they certainly do not exist in the abundance I knew in the 1980s and 1990s.

The places in which the bodies of these defenders reside are withering away, and a space in which like-minded next generations might take up lives here hardly seems to exist. As Silicon Valley becomes an ever more looming global power, people are losing their homes, their community spaces, their neighborhoods, and then we are losing those people whose memories and commitments weave together the disparate objects of a city into a beloved whole.

The other sabotage is the subtle and unsubtle attacks on the value, meaning, and enthusiasm for bodies in places. At least since the first aggressive influx of tech workers during the original dot-com boom, the paradox of people who want to live in San Francisco but whose official ideology is that the less you leave your house and encounter strangers and have unmediated contact, the better, has resulted in groups of six who stand around in lines waiting for brunch on Valencia Street while looking at six different phones. More seriously, it results in a host of products whose official virtue is convenience, which means not leaving home and being in places you share with other people you don't know. Isolation becomes an ideal.

It seems to be a culture, if "culture" is the word, for anywhere-but-here strategies. The sensibility of Silicon Valley is: all things mediated, and the means of mediation is corporations in search of profit. Sex, food, cars and drivers, furniture, and services are all orderable online and by phone via Grindr, Tinder, Uber, Google Shopping, Craigslist, TaskRabbit, and the rest. For workers these app-driven corporations are under-the-radar attacks on working conditions, including the conditions in which workers might readily organize. Workers do much of this piecework in isolation with no job security, benefits, or rights. The bodies in space together that was a workplace made it possible to organize and build relationships; isolated workers are expected to also be nearly invisible.

Andrew Callaway, who spent a month working for TaskRabbit, Postmates, and Uber, wrote of the experience: "Postmates couriers are told that it is strictly against the rules to shake a customer's hand. Like all rules, this didn't come from nowhere. The truth is that using sharing economy services can breed contempt for the workers… Plenty of people requested that I drop off their food at the door.

Customers grow to love apps that make the worker anonymous. That way, you don't have to feel guilty about having servants." So you hire someone to buy your frozen yogurt so you don't have to leave the house and go out into communal space, and then you avoid even seeing the person who helped you avoid that contact, avoid being a body in public space. Or even a body in the same place as one other body.

Being a body in public matters to democracy. So does having privacy from your government and other large powers. Facebook and Google and the rest gather data about you to build sophisticated profiles to allow advertisers to target you, because Silicon Valley has also brought us the surveillance state that Edward Snowden and others have revolted against in the name of democracy and freedom. That a place once so associated with these latter things is where the attacks on them are now masterminded is demoralizing. The new digital panopticon is run in large part from Silicon Valley.

There was another bodies-in-space demonstration about the NSA and AT&T's role in gathering information on February 11, 2014. The activists stood in front of AT&T headquarters, a few blocks from Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. The demonstration was after dark; the demonstrators held glowing letters that spelled out "stop SPYING," and the West Coast version of the Illuminator, the outdoor projector used so well in Occupy Wall Street, projected in lettering imitating the ad slogans of the corporation: "AT&T. Your World. Delivered. To the NSA."

Of course choosing to be in a region where bodies and place still matter made some of these corporations vulnerable. The suburban campuses were largely out of reach for First Amendment activities, though there were minor protests at their gates, but in late 2015 activists invaded San Francisco–based Airbnb with a brass band and balloons bearing well-crafted messages about eviction and homelessness that floated up to the ceiling and stayed there for the duration. 48hills, the online local news site run by former Bay Guardian editor Tim Redmond, reported in January, "The report shows that the company made $194 million in SF during that one-year period, and $105 million was from illegal units." The rental corporation is another force withering away the available housing in the city, replacing stable populations with an investment in place with transients. Thus shrivels the available housing for the people who show up at the demonstrations that have made this place a key spot for the struggles for democracy, for liberty, for justice.

The bodies for democracy are still at work. They blocked the Bay Bridge on Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2016, blocked freeways after the grand jury exonerated the policeman who killed the black teen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (as they did after the first Rodney King verdict in 1992, when various wars broke out). There are still paint-balloon stains on the Bay View Bank building at 22nd and Mission Streets from when activists furious about the eviction of non profits serving low-income Latinos tossed their projectiles at the place, where a start-up called Bigstep.com came, saw, conquered, fizzled, disappeared, and, like so many other arrivistes of the dot.com boom, left a void. There were simple blockades and demonstrations. There were also poster campaigns and sophisticated interventions during that wave of incursion and resistance. The project Together We Can Defeat Capitalism mounted flashing signboards—the kind that warn you of roadwork and detours—south of Market with messages such as "WARNING. DIGITAL DIVIDE AHEAD." That was May 1, 2000; on January 21, 2014, activists held official-looking signs in front of a tech shuttle bus that said "WARNING. TWO TIER SYSTEM." (A less professionally crafted sign said in big round purple letters, "Fuck Off Google.")

In the current round of resistance—or at least objection—to Silicon Valley, demonstrations have been organized by email and other online means, and digital projects such as the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project proved crucial parts of the discourse. Bodies blocking the Google Bus (as all tech shuttles were termed) in 2014 made the impact of these private luxury shuttles international news and obliged local politicians to address their illegality, but the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project demonstrated that rents and evictions rose in proximity to the tech shuttle stops. The sheer density of no-fault evictions on their 2014 map on the subject was shocking; I called the map a picture of a city punched by money.

Some of the resistance during the first and second tech booms has been more successful; many evictions have been stopped, and vulnerable populations and institutions have been protected. But there may come a point when the people who have engaged in these kinds of defensive skirmishes are no longer here. They will have lost their homes, or their ranks will have thinned, and there will be no replacements among those who have to work far more than what we used to call full-time at high-end corporate jobs to pay for housing in this gilded cage. And those people may have never known why bodies in places matter, or how they mattered in this place.

THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW

CHRISTIAN L. FROCK

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.

REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.,
Riverside Church, New York, 1967[1]

Early in January 2016, President Obama spoke publicly about a number of new executive actions aimed to curb the American gun violence epidemic that claims more than 100,000 victims annually.[2] In his national address, the president spoke of this escalating violence in terms of "the fierce urgency of now," an oft-used phrase in Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches of the late 1960s. Then, King was speaking against the war in Vietnam. Today, the most pressing issues of our time—from gun violence to racial justice to wealth disparities to gender equity to war to migration to climate change—also call for urgency, and vigorous and positive action.

The artists, activists, and technologists featured in *Take This Hammer* demonstrate the unlimited possibilities for responding to today's pressing challenges through a variety of tactics anchored in visual art, performance, action, and digital media. Each of the works engages different approaches, ranging from overt, radical political demonstrations to subtler creative gestures aimed at making visible the unseen personal stories at the heart of the issues. Several works demonstrate the ways that artists leverage digital media to engage with an expanded public online, while others draw from Internet resources to bear witness. Some works are built from spectacle, some from data. Taken as a whole, they demonstrate a spectrum of strategies for activism, political engagement, and participation in civic life.

The title of the exhibition is borrowed from the title of a 1963 documentary film, coproduced by KQED and WNET, featuring the novelist and social critic James Baldwin. In it Baldwin considers life for African Americans in San Francisco in the early 1960s. Beyond drawing comparisons between past and present social conditions, situating this film in relation to so much contemporary media also aims to reveal the intertwined trajectories of public media and social media, and the significant role these platforms have held in providing space for public inquiry into challenging subjects. The title is additionally a nod to the idea of the German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht that "art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it." If art is a hammer with which we can shape culture, this exhibition is intended to instill in you, gentle reader, a sense of personal agency in collective change making.

In presenting this range of political engagement—and in considering the possibilities for even more —T*ake This Hammer* endeavors to complicate conventional narratives around activism and the role of art in social change. Who is an activist? Anyone who chooses to heed the call. An activist, simply defined, is someone who campaigns for social change, and today this can be realized in any number of ways, from marching in the streets to launching a petition online. You could, right now, write or record or perform a message pertinent to your feelings about anything—the poisoned water in Flint, gentrification in Oakland, the death of Mario Woods—and post it on YouTube, SoundCloud, Vine, Vimeo, Facebook, Twitter, or any other such platform, and you will have taken a stand. Even the simple use of hashtags or changing one's profile picture, sometimes derisively referred to as "slacktivism," has come to demonstrate a kind of political influence. This is as yet difficult to quantify, but the organizing power of hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter is increasingly self-evident, and changing one's profile picture can be seen as a nascent gesture toward holding a public position, and as an emboldening call to our expanded personal networks.

Such quick and simple gestures have of course come under fire for having an intrinsic relationship to a corporate agenda. The Internet isn't a neutral space for public expression. Even as it mimics actual public space, it is in fact a predominantly corporate, privatized realm geared toward both surveillance and commerce through data mining, and virtually all of the social media platforms that engender public expression are also profiting from this engagement. (So-called public spaces are now also geared toward surveillance and commerce, are they not?) Yet small gestures online, when viewed collectively, can offer a magnificent portrait of solidarity, thanks to the medium's unprecedented potential reach and connectivity. In the time preceding the legalization of same-sex marriage, Facebook published a map of the country depicting the number of people who changed their profile picture in solidarity with this movement, and it reflected a country blanketed in support for marriage equality, an image we might not otherwise have had.

Though they do not supplant sustained engagement with the issues in the communities where we live and work, digital media offer new points of entry into the conversation, as well as new ways of garnering impact. Now ubiquitous, camera phones have made video and photography accessible to a vast audience of participatory users of all ages and backgrounds. Combined with the myriad tools of the Internet and the potential for global connectivity via social media, they have become powerful assets in generating dialogue and, often, spurring real action. In recent years we've seen enough examples of police brutality recorded on personal devices to know how effective this technology has been in impacting the conversation around systemic racism in this country. The evidence is indisputable.

In all likelihood, the world might not know the story of Eric Garner's death at the hands of New York police officers had it not been for his friend Ramsey Orta recording it on his phone and the video going viral online.[3] Months later, following the grand jury's decision not to indict the officers involved in Garner's death, social justice organizers laid down on the ground in New York's Grand Central Station in peaceful protest, a gesture that was immediately taken up in solidarity by bystanders and echoed in waves of protest around the country. People laid down in the streets, in schools, in stores, in government buildings. The spectacular images posted online by observers and participants circulated widely, generating more actions and responses, effectively blurring the boundary between offline "real life" activism and media activism. The increasing presence of hashtags in the protest signs of public demonstrations and in visual culture more generally further obscures the division between activism on- and offline.

Another example would certainly be the reversal of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation's plans to defund Planned Parenthood after an overwhelming number of people decried the announcement online in 2012.[4] By the end of the day after the initial announcement, nearly half a million people had posted responses to the decision online. By the end of the week, Twitter users had posted more than 1.3 million tweets on the topic. This pressure, and the negative press it generated, resulted in the swift reversal of the foundation's decision. In the three days that it might have taken to organize demonstrations in so-called real life, the Internet had spoken and the Komen foundation's decision had been crowd-corrected via the ether.

Early in the rise of social media, which was not that long ago, there was a popular tendency to discredit online activism in favor of traditional peopled protest. The writer Malcolm Gladwell wrote an extensive piece in the *New Yorker* in October 2010 dismissing the potential impact of online activism on these grounds, drawing on examples from the 1960s civil rights movement.[5] In hindsight, it may have simply been too soon to tell what results might arise from this new semipublic realm. We've since seen a range of activity that has undermined Gladwell's position, including the rise of what has been called "a new civil rights movement" largely driven by media activism. Yet Alicia Garza, a cofounder of Black Lives Matter, remains adamant that this movement is not at all "new," but rather a continuation of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and before. Today's media activism, she and many others assert, represents new tactics, not new causes. The latest struggles for racial justice or gender equality or environmental protection are rooted in a long history of sustained engagement. There may be victories in the moment, but the movements are ongoing.

In situations where public opinion matters, the noise potential of digital media far exceeds that of pre–Internet era protests by virtue of global reach and repetition. (Everything lives online forever, we're told, for better or worse.) And unlike the massive demonstrations of conventional activism that require a large cohort of participants, the Internet allows for the potential impact of a single voice or image to spark a larger dialogue or instigate a cultural shift. Case in point: in the immediate aftermath of the San Bernardino massacre, *Think Progress* editor Igor Volsky's tweets exposing the NRA's hold on various politicians expressing impotent sympathies in the wake of yet another mass shooting forced a different conversation about the gridlocked politics of the gun lobby.

This power potential is just as accessible to a conservative schema as it is to a progressive agenda. As we approach this year's elections, we increasingly see the same online platforms and methodologies leveraged on both sides of the political divide. Even as the tools of social media are presented as neutral, political power is often measured in bandwidth, giving the impression that whoever shouts the loudest appears to be winning. Speaking up has never seemed as important as it does now: to claim the things that matter to you, to find strength in numbers, to mobilize toward action. Progress is an ongoing struggle, as is a progressive agenda.

The message need not always be about what we are against. There is also powerful potential in envisioning the world we want to live in. The ability to foresee a world free from gun violence, for example, is how we begin to imagine achieving these ends, and this is not an impossible task; we know this because other countries have accomplished it. When you think about the world you want to live in, what do you see? This is the time—*right now*—to imagine the possibilities for a better future.

Sometimes it only takes one person to help us see how the world can be different. After the devastating racist shooting and act of terrorism at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston that left nine people dead, the artist and activist Bree Newsome climbed the flagpole at the South Carolina capitol building to singlehandedly take down the Confederate flag, a historic symbol of hate that held no meaning for the future. The images online of Newsome pulling down the flag were uplifting and empowering as a symbol of individual strength crafting the way forward.[6] Each of us possesses the potential to exert this kind of impact on the world we want to live in. Start with whatever you care most about in the fierce urgency of now.
Start here. Take this hammer.

Essay's Notes

1. Congressional Record Transcripts, May 18, 1967, http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-ernest-gruening-mlk-0.

2. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, "Key Gun Violence Statistics," http://www.bradycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics.

3. Amy Goodman, "Why Is Ramsey Orta, Man Who Filmed Police Killing of Eric Garner, the Only One Criminally Charged?" Democracy Now, January 12, 2016, http://www.democracynow.org/2016/1/12/why_is_ramsey_orta_man_who.

4. Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change," The New Yorker, October 4, 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell.

5. Pam Belluck, Jennifer Preston, and Gardiner Harris, "Cancer Group Backs Down on Cutting Off Planned Parenthood," New York Times, February 2, 2013.

6. Amy Goodman, "This Flag Comes Down Today: Bree Newsome Scales SC Capitol Flagpole, Takes Down Confederate Flag," Democracy Now, July 3, 2015, http://www.democracynow.org/

Imin Yeh, *Untitled*, 2013. Courtesy the artist and CultureStrike.

Jesus Barraza, *Viva La Mujer*, 2014. Courtesy Dignidad Rebelde.